

Mosquito Management-What People Can Do at Home

It's that time of the year again when mosquitos are forcing you inside and you can't enjoy your porch or deck. CDC states that mosquito-borne diseases are spreading quickly around the United States. Many homeowners resort to spraying because it is a quick and obvious response. EPA and CDC do not recommend spraying due to the possible exposure to potentially dangerous pesticides and to the impact on pollinating insects such as honey bees, wild bees and butterflies that play an important role in the availability of many agricultural products.

Pesticides, alone and in combination with other factors, have had a devastating effect on honeybees and wild pollinators. Pesticides commonly found in lawn and garden products and used in agriculture are known to be hazardous to bees – some killing bees outright and others with subtle effects that reduce a bee's ability to thrive. Approximately 90 percent of all flowering plants require pollinators to survive. In agriculture, nearly a third of pollination is accomplished by honeybees. Cucumbers, almonds, carrots, melons, apricots, cherries, pears, apples, prunes, plums, cantaloupe, onions, avocados, kiwi, blueberries, cranberries and more depend on honeybee pollination.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), Mosquito Control Section, is responsible for administering and implementing mosquito control within the State of Maryland. The State works closely with the Montgomery County Mosquito Control Program. Mosquito season typically runs from late May to early October. During this time, the State and County mosquito control program conducts a variety of routine activities including arboviral surveillance and testing, mosquito population surveillance activities, source reduction, biological control initiatives, ground and aerial application of insecticides, and public education.

Mosquitos undergo four life stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Disrupting a mosquitos' life cycle and habitat may reduce the number of mosquitoes around you and your environment. There are steps you can take to reduce mosquito populations before choosing to use a pesticide product. If you choose to use an insecticide, be sure to read and follow all label directions. Some products are designed to be applied directly to water to control mosquito larvae, while others are used more broadly to control adult mosquitoes.

Tips to Rid Your Home of Mosquito Breeding Sites

1. Clean rain gutters to allow water to flow freely.
2. Remove old tires or drill drainage holes in tires used for playground equipment.
3. Store plastic wading pools inside or turn them upside down when not in use.
4. Turn over or remove clay pots and plastic containers.
5. Dispose of all empty beverage containers, plastic wrappers, discarded toys, etc.
6. Check for trapped water in plastic or canvas tarps used to cover boats, pools, etc.
Arrange the tarp to drain the water.
7. Pump out bilges in boats. Turn canoes and small boats upside down for storage.
8. Replace water in bird baths at least twice a week.

9. Remove pet food and water dishes that are not being used.
10. Don't leave garbage can lids lying upside down. Be sure that water does not collect in the bottom of garbage cans.
11. Flush water in the bottom of plant holders twice a week.
12. Fix dripping outside water faucets.
13. Turn wheelbarrows upside down when stored outside.
14. Check around construction sites or do-it-yourself improvements to ensure that proper backfilling and grading prevent drainage problems.
15. Check ornamental ponds, tree holes and water-holding low areas for mosquito larvae. Call the nearest Mosquito Control Office if you find, or suspect, mosquito larvae are present
16. Since mosquitos bite indoors, CDC recommends the use of structural barriers such as window and door screens. Cover all gaps in walls, doors, and cover all baby carriers with netting.
17. Wear protective clothing when going outside in the early morning and evening.
18. Note that least-toxic mosquito repellents can be employed that contain less-harmful ingredients approved for use by EPA. Many common mosquito sprays contain harmful ingredients, so it is important to read labels carefully before buying and using repellents.

Spraying

Should you choose to hire a contractor to spray around your home to deter mosquitos, you should make sure that the company is licensed to apply pesticides in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) is the licensing body and it has a web tool where a user can enter the name of the company to determine if is licensed. If you or when your contractor plans to spray, tell your neighbors so they can plan on any safety precautions they might take.

Broader-scale spraying of mosquitos may be performed by the MDA or other public agencies when other mosquito controls are not possible or are not effective in reducing mosquitos below a level that may cause unacceptable annoyance or a public health threat.

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